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## HISTORY OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY UNIVERSITY.

WALLACE N. STEARNS.

Prior to 1886, Dakota Methodism constituted a part of the Red River District of the Minnesota conference.

One of the first questions that concerned these Methodist pioneers was that of education. As early as 1880 the members of the Minnesota conference, in session at Minneapolis, adopted the report of its educational committee to consider establishing a seminary at Fargo, the institution to be regarded as a department of Hamline university, so long as that city remained in the Minnesota conference.<sup>1</sup> The object of this caveat was to prevent a division of resources and dissipation of energies, it being deemed that one institution of collegiate grade was all that the conditions of country and population warranted.

The proposition did not receive effective support.<sup>2</sup> The location at Fargo was central, bordering on the Red river, which later became the boundary between the two states. Not only would the school, if successful, become an educational center for North Dakota, but by becoming a center for northwestern Minnesota would act at cross purposes with the young institution at Hamline.

In 1882 public sentiment seemed more favorable. The educational committee reported:<sup>3</sup> "We hail with pleasure the inauguration of a Methodist school in the Red River valley, to be located at Fargo, and hope great things for the future of the Red River Collegiate Institute.<sup>4</sup> We recommend the following persons be appointed as its first board of trustees, with instructions to organize as soon as possible in accordance with law, viz: The presiding

<sup>1</sup>The closing paragraph of this report reads: "RESOLVED, That the presiding elders of Red River district and the pastor at Fargo be authorized to consider the establishing of a seminary under the patronage of this conference at Fargo, provided that said seminary shall not be established except as a department of Hamline University, which relation shall continue so long as that city remains in this conference." Minutes Minnesota Annual Conference, 1880, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>The educational committee reported at the conference session, held in Fargo in 1881, as follows: "We learn that steps are being taken in Fargo to secure a seminary. And we heartily commend the movement and wish it the largest success." Proceedings Minnesota Annual Conference, 1881, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes Minnesota Annual Conference, 1882, p. 52. The conference met in Owatonna, Minn.

<sup>4</sup>Dakota was then the boundless range on the western border of Minnesota. The college was intended to serve the entire valley region, hence the name, Red River Valley University, now cut in half by the state line.

elder of the Red River district, the pastors at Fargo, Moorhead, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Bismarck and Casselton; General Geo. P. Wilson and N. H. Hubbard, of Fargo, and R. R. Briggs and F. A. Elder, of Moorhead."

The following year the appointed trustees reported to the conference<sup>1</sup> the election of Rev. M. S. Kaufman<sup>2</sup> as president, and also announced the expectancy of opening the school that fall.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the "Red River Collegiate Institute" at Fargo was never opened, although the movement received the endorsement of the North Dakota mission conference at its first session, held in 1884, and again in the following year.

The North Dakota annual conference at its first session, held in 1886, and again in 1887, earnestly advocated the need of an institution of higher learning, and this action was heartily supported by the lay electoral conference.

Each year the matter was brought up, and in 1890 a committee was appointed and directed to act "under certain conditions and within a fixed time." The project now took definite form in the following resolutions:

"Resolved, I. That the committee chosen to locate a college in the North Dakota conference, shall give every place the opportunity of making a new bid or increasing a bid already made, and that on the 20th of January, 1891, all bids shall be in and no bids shall be received thereafter, and not later than March 1st, 1891, the committee shall decide as to which bid they will accept, and that no bid shall be accepted at less than eighty acres of land, or its equivalent, and ten thousand dollars in money.

Resolved, II. That the committee shall consist of the presiding elders and one member and one layman from each district, with the bishop residing at Minneapolis ex-officio chairman, and that the bishop and his cabinet be requested to present nominations for the balance of the committee at the closing session of the conference."

The articles of incorporation bear the date, February 25, 1891,<sup>4</sup> and the institution was named "The Red River Valley University."

<sup>1</sup>Held in St. Paul, October 3-8, 1883. Minutes Minnesota Annual Conference, 1883, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Pastor of Methodist Episcopal Church in Fargo, and so a member of the board of trustees.

<sup>3</sup>"Your committee are pleased to report progress in the organization and opening of this school. Rev. M. S. Kaufman has been chosen president. The school is to open this fall. We therefore recommend the appointment of Rev. M. S. Kaufman as president, also the following names as trustees: Presiding elder of Red River district, pastors at Fargo, Moorhead, Grand Forks, Casselton; also General Geo. P. Wilson, N. K. Hubbard, of Fargo; R. R. Briggs, F. A. Elder, W. W. Allen, of Moorhead."

<sup>4</sup>"Resolved, That the action of the presiding elders in securing articles of incorporation of the university instead of a charter, which was impracticable, be and is hereby approved by the conference." Minutes North Dakota Annual Conference, 1891, p. 12. Cf. Id. 28-30.

A board of trustees, lay and ministerial, was selected to carry out the plans formulated.<sup>1</sup>

As the city of Wahpeton had offered a tract of eighty acres, valued at \$4,000, and a cash donation of \$21,000, including \$10,000 from a Chicago friend, Mr. J. Q. Adams,<sup>2</sup> that city was selected as the site of the future institution. Rev. J. N. Fredenburgh, Ph. D., D. D., was elected the first president of the college, and under his administration the work of building was begun, the foundation being completed June 25, 1891. In this same year a faculty of four teachers was selected to carry on the work of instruction. The heroism and devotion of these friends of the struggling school deserves the highest praise. No complete list could be given here, but among others the early records often mention such names as Larimore, Lynch, White, French, Adams, Planette, and others worthy of mention, and many smaller gifts and services reveal the spirit and will of the citizens of the state.<sup>3</sup> Their sacrifices and high ideals remind us of the doughty Hollanders who, when offered exception from heavy debts or the gift of a university, chose the latter.

In June, 1892, Dr. Fredenburgh felt it his duty to accept a call to another field, and Rev. M. V. B. Knox, D. D., was chosen to succeed him. In the following October the college was formally opened, work was actually begun.<sup>4</sup> Rev. D. C. Planette, who from the first had aided in the work, accepted an appointment as financial agent and began again a systematic canvass of the state. The records show, among others, a gift of five hundred dollars from so far away as Rhode Island. This first year the attendance aggregated 80,<sup>1</sup> rising the next year to 115, 120 the year following, and by 1898 the

<sup>1</sup>"Resolved, That in the vote for trustees each ballot shall contain eight names, and that layman and that minister who receive the greatest number of votes be the trustees for the term of four years; that layman and that minister receiving the next largest number be the trustees for three years; that layman and that minister receiving the next highest number be the trustees for two years; and layman and that minister receiving the least number be the trustees for one year; provided, that no one shall be elected trustee who shall not receive a majority of all the votes cast."

<sup>2</sup>"Resolved, That we hereby record our appreciation of the generous and liberal gift which the Hon. J. Q. Adams, of Chicago, and the people of Wahpeton, have made for the establishment of our university." *Id.*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>E. g. See the report of the financial secretary, Proceedings of the North Dakota Annual Conference, 1892, p. 31. In the report of the conference visitors, Proceedings 1893, p. 31 (also 1896, p. 37; 1899, p. 35) we read: "We are glad to testify to the faithfulness of the members of the faculty, who have stood by the work regardless of all the discouragements they have met." Again, *Id.*, 1899, p. 55, we read: "The pay of these teachers has been ridiculously low, falling short of the living wage of day laborers." Such is the path of the pioneer, and the services of these early educators constitute one of the most significant factors in the history of the state.

<sup>4</sup>*Id.*, 1892, p. 29 f.

<sup>1</sup>*Id.*, 1893, p. 31; 1895, pp. 32, 35; 1898, p. 32.

enrollment was 141. A college paper, "The Wahpetonian," dates from 1895;<sup>2</sup> also two literary societies, one—Knox lyceum—for gentlemen, and one—Mason lyceum—for the ladies of the school. The year 1894 was also marked by a reorganization with a view to increasing the representation and consequently the influence of the college in the state.<sup>3</sup>

In 1900 Rev. E. P. Robertson, A. M., D. D., was called to the presidency. Under his leadership more money was raised, debts were paid, the plant improved and the enrollment increased.<sup>4</sup> In 1904-5 the attendance was 284, classified as follows:

College .....	18
Academy .....	57
Commercial .....	49
Music .....	160
<hr/>	
Total .....	284

<sup>2</sup>"The Wahpetonian, that bright little school paper issued by the students, shows something of the enthusiasm there is in the college." Id., 1895, p. 32; Id., 1894, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>The governing board, as constituted by the conference in its session of 1894, is constituted as follows:

"Section 1. The number of trustees of this corporation shall be twenty-one.

"Section 2. Of the number of trustees twelve (12) thereof shall be elected by the North Dakota Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in such manner as said conference may authorize or direct, and nine (9) thereof shall be elected by the board of trustees of said corporation in such manner as it may see fit, not inconsistent with the laws of said state.

"Section 3. In addition to the number of trustees heretofore elected by the said conference, under the articles of incorporation, the said conference at its annual meeting in 1894 shall elect six (6) trustees, whose terms of office shall be as follows: Three (3) for a term of four (4) years, one (1) for a term of three (3) years, and one (1) for a term of one (1) year. Thereafter at each annual meeting of said conference it shall elect three (3) members for a term of four years each. Of the twelve trustees elected and continued in office by said conference, only six shall be members of its own body.

"Section 4. In addition to the number of trustees heretofore elected by said board, under the said articles of incorporation, the said board shall, at its annual meeting in 1894, elect seven trustees, whose terms of office shall be as follows: Three (3) for a term of three (3) years, two (2) for a term of two (2) years, and two (2) for a term of one (1) year. Thereafter at each annual meeting of said board it shall elect three (3) members of said board for a term of three years each.

"Section 5. Any portion of the articles of incorporation heretofore adopted, in so far as they conflict with these amendments, are hereby repealed." Minutes North Dakota Annual Conference, 1894, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>"The educational committee of the conference reported: "In particular we believe the Red River Valley University to be worthy of our best devotion. Its promise is as great as our needs. \* \* \* We congratulate the conference upon the selection of Rev. E. P. Robertson as president of the university." Id., 1903, pp. 37, 40.



At about this time President Merrifield, of the University of North Dakota, in an address before the annual conference in session in Grand Forks, March, 1900, discussed the university-college affiliation idea, and at the close extended to the Methodist church of the state an invitation to move their college to a location adjoining the state university, and to make such use of the facilities of the state university as might seem feasible. Moral obligations to certain benefactors and to the citizens of Wahpeton prevented action at the time, but in 1904, after some twelve years of successful work, the officials and friends of the university began to consider the advisability of accepting the overtures of the state university to remove its location to Grand Forks. The reasons for such action were: (1) The strength of the denomination in the northern and western parts of the state; (2) Unlike other states, North Dakota was still sparsely settled, and multiplicity of institutions seemed unnecessary; (3) As the members of the denomination, in common with other citizens of the state, contribute to the support of the state university, it seemed wise to make use of the facilities thus afforded; (4) Though success had been achieved, it seemed to the patrons of the school that in the new location under new conditions the same expenditure of effort would be productive of larger results; (5) By concentration of energies, the college could render to the church a larger service in this new field, which was more centrally located, and in a section where a large Methodist population was to be found. In January, 1905, the heads of the two institutions met, and after deliberation, came to an agreement on a memorandum which has become the basis of co-operation:<sup>1</sup>

"Whereas, The state university is in theory the university of all the people of the state, and is supported by the taxes of the members of the several denominations, as well as by the other citizens of the state, it would seem to be appropriate and fitting that the churches of the several denominations in the state should avail themselves of the privileges which belong to their members as citizens of the state, and should use, to whatever extent may seem desirable in the conduct of their educational work, the facilities afforded by the state university.

"It is recognized that the state university is a civic institution, and has for its mission the training of the youth of the state for efficient service as citizens. It is recognized, also, that the distinctive object of the church in maintaining schools of its own is to secure trained leadership in religious and denominational work. There is, therefore, logically, no conflict between their respective missions, for the same young people are to serve in both these capacities. These two missions being in no sense antagonistic, but supplementary, it would seem the part of wise economy that these two educational agencies should avail themselves, so far as possible, of the facilities and appliances of each other in the working out of their respective missions, keeping always in view the principle of the separation of the church and state in so far as regards the control and expenditure of the financial resources of each.

"Accepting the foregoing principles as fundamentally sound, the university of North Dakota cordially invites the people of the various denominations of the state to the consideration of a plan under which the members of the several denominations, while preserving their denominational

The year 1905-6 was spent in securing additional funds. As the citizens of Wahpeton had given a considerable share toward the disposed of to the advantage of the city of Wahpeton. Accordingly the land with the building, estimated at \$45,000, was transferred to the state science school, located in the same city, for the sum of \$20,000, the balance, \$25,000, being pledged by the city of Grand Forks.<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1906 work was resumed under the educational name of Wesley college, though for business purposes the old corporation name, "Red River Valley University," is retained.

identity and maintaining the separate institutions for such educational work as they may deem necessary, shall join, as citizens, as patrons of the state university as the common agency for the higher education of the youth of the state.

"As a basis of co-operation between the state university and the Methodist Church of the state, the following suggestions seem practicable:

"1. That the Methodist Church change the name of its institution from Red River Valley University to Wesley College.

"2. That a building or buildings be erected in near proximity to the state university, but on a separate campus, to include a guild hall, such recitation rooms as may be required for the work proposed, possibly dormitories for young women and young men, and a president's house.

"3. That the course of study may be:

"(a) Bible and church history, English bible, new testament Greek, Hebrew, Theism, and such other subjects as the college may elect in pursuance of its purpose.

"(b) A brief course that may be designated as a bible normal course, intended especially to fit students to become efficient Sunday school teachers and lay workers, and upon the completing of which certificates of recognition may be granted.

"(c) Instruction in music and elocution may be given if desired, and appropriate certificates granted.

"(d) Guild hall lectures.

"4. That the state university grant for work done in subjects included under (a) above, such credit towards the B. A. degree as it gives to technical work done in its own professional schools and to work done in other colleges of reputable standing. Likewise, Wesley College shall give credit for work done in the state university in similar manner, as preparation for any degree or certificate it may offer.

"5. Each institution shall have full control of the discipline of students upon its own grounds.

"6. It shall be deemed proper for students to take degrees from both institutions, if they so desire."

"We feel as a conference that the action of the trustees of the Red River Valley University, relative to the continuance of college work at Wahpeton and to the disposal of the property in same place, was a wise and most opportune move. We believe that the educational interests of the Methodist Episcopal Church in North Dakota will be fully conserved in the plan outlined by Dr. Robertson in the 'Memorandum of Conversion,' whereby the extensive facilities already made accessible by the state may be used by our young people without the sacrifice of opportunity for definite and positive spiritual and religious training.

"We declare it our conviction that the success or failure of such a plan will depend upon the type and quality of men selected to serve as instructors, and that properly equipped instructors may be secured we

## FIRST BOARD OF TRUSTEES--APPOINTED OCT. 8, 1882.

Rev. J. B. Starkey, presiding elder, Red River district; Rev. M. S. Kaufman, pastor, Fargo; Rev. F. Doran, pastor, Moorhead; Rev. T. F. Allen, pastor, Grand Forks; Rev. W. L. Demorest, pastor, Jamestown; Rev. J. C. Rhodes, pastor, Bismarck; Rev. C. B. Brecount, pastor, Casselton; Gen. George P. Wilson, Fargo; N. H. Hubbard, Fargo; R. R. Briggs, Moorhead; F. A. Elder, Moorhead.

Minutes annual conference, 1882, p. 52.

## SECOND BOARD OF TRUSTEES--APPOINTED OCT. 8, 1883.

Rev. G. R. Hair, presiding elder, Red River district; Messrs. Kaufman, Doran, Allen, Wilson, Hubbard, Briggs, Elder—as above, and, Rev. G. W. Burtch, pastor, Casselton; W. W. Elder, Moorhead.

Id., 1883, p. 69.

## FIRST BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF RED RIVER VALLEY UNIVERSITY, ELECTED (GRAND FORKS) OCTOBER 24, 1891.

P. J. McCumber, four years; N. G. Larimore, three years; W. H. White, two years; J. D. Wallace, one year; Rev. J. N. Fredenburgh, four years; Rev. E. B. Stull, three years; Rev. G. H. Van Vliet, two years; Rev. T. H. Sheckler, one year.

Minutes N. D. annual conference, 1891, p. 14.

First meeting of this board was held March 17-18, 1891, Id., p. 30.

These persons succeeded a provisional board appointed by a conference committee (Wahpeton, Feb. 5, 1891) to whom had been delegated power to consider and act in matters pertaining to the founding of the college:

Messrs. W. P. Adams, P. J. McCumber, T. L. French, J. H. Keeley, A. T. Foster, S. E. Ryan, J. A. Hovis, N. G. Larimore, R. B. Richardson, Wm. H. White, D. C. Plannette.

advise the payment of salaries commensurate with service required. We also recommend that the students be admitted to our proposed college with no greater expense than is exacted from them by the state university.

"We again desire to express our appreciation of Dr. E. P. Robertson as leader of this work, both as to the spirit he has manifested and as to the most efficient work done during the year; that our faith and loyalty may be made more practicable and tangible, we recommend that the sum of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) be appropriated to the conference, and the pastors be requested to raise their apportionment at an early date following conference. The money thus raised to be used only in payment of instructors' salaries. We feel further that the election of an instructor to a chair at once would promote the interest of the school, both in the work proposed and the support that would be given it." Year Book North Dakota Conference, 1905, p. 55.

## PRESIDENTS.

Rev. M. S. Kaufman, Ph. D., Red River Institute, 1883; Rev. J. N. Fradenburgh, Ph. D., D. D., Red River Valley University, 1891-1892; Rev. M. V. B. Knox, D. D., 1892-1899; Rev. E. P. Robertson, A. M., D. D., 1900 to date.

THE FIRST FACULTY OF RED RIVER VALLEY  
UNIVERSITY.

Rev. M. V. B. Knox, D. D., president; Rev. Jacob A. Hovis, A. M., vice president; Mrs. Jeanette Hill Knox, M. A.; Miss Sarah Mason, B. A.; Professor W. A. Pepoon, B. S., instructor in art and drawing; Miss Ottie S. Parsons, instructress in music.

Minutes N. D. annual conference, 1892, p. 30.